

Remarks

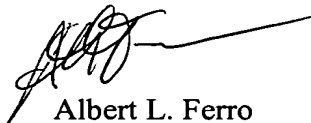
Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 18-27 are pending in the application, with claim 18 being the only independent claim. Claims 1-17 are sought to be cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. New claims 18-27 are sought to be added. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Preliminary Amendment is respectfully requested. Applicants believe the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Respectfully submitted,

STERNE, KESSLER, GOLDSTEIN & FOX P.L.L.C.



Albert L. Ferro
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 44,679

Date: April 2, 2004

1100 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005-3934
(202) 371-2600

246278_1.DOC